

2. *A Practical Treatise on the Typhus or Adynamic Fever.* By JOHN BURNE, M. D. Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, London, &c. &c. &c. London, 1828. pp. 248. 8vo.

Of the present book, the medical critics will form very different, and many of them, opposite judgments. The Broussalian will find nothing to support his views, and will therefore throw aside the book as pertaining to the darker ages of medicine; the Cullenian will be startled at some admixture of modern heresy, while he applauds the divisions of fever, and the general tenor of the book; and the followers of our illustrious Rush will look in vain for those luciferous terms, unity of fever, excitability, stimulus, &c.; but the true eclectic in medicine will find in it much to commend; and, that unlike most other books, its greatest fault is brevity.

The author observes, "that all the notions which have been set forth concerning fever appear to him prejudiced, or vague, and undefined, serving only to perplex and embarrass." This is most certainly true, and must continue to be so while medical writers indulge their imaginations rather than exercise their memory; and thus, instead of patiently telling us how to cure *tute, celeriter, et jucunde*, a certain state of the system with a certain group of consequent symptoms, shall run into wild theories concerning remote and proximate causes, bewildering even their own imaginations with a confusion of transitory spectres, which all vanish in the light of experience. All these inventions, *questi bene trovati*, this author has for the most part avoided; and has endeavoured to give us a plain transcript of what he saw, and what may be seen by others, in the old-fashioned style and manner. His book is evidently copied from nature. No man who has become acquainted with typhous fever can fail to recognise the disease in the pages of Dr. Burne. Not only therefore ought his history of this fever to be faithfully studied and confided in, but his opinions on controversial points ought to bave a more than ordinary claim on our acquiescence.

Our author sets out by advocating the old division of fevers into *typhous* and *inflammatory*, a division which the writer of this article has long considered as of the first importance; and one that might have saved the lives of thousands, had it been duly studied before the prevalence of typhus pneumonoides in the United States. The unitarian doctrine of fever is a mere hubble of the imagination that ought to be blown aside without further notice. It was the embryo production of a great mind that was unfortunately lost in combating the very disease that would certainly have taught him more correct views. We remember with sorrow how much this doctrine of unity embarrassed our early practice, particularly in the treatment of typhus pneumonoides; and how we continually struggled with difficulties, until we escaped from the trammels of education, and found instruction in the school of Cullen.

The old word *typhus* our author has thought proper to abandon, because it has not been used in the same sense by all writers since the days of Hippocrates, and is therefore liable to misconception. Of the necessity or the utility of this change we are by no means convinced. All physicians, wherever English books are read, seem to understand thoroughly what is meant by idiopathic typhus. It is true that many of them extend the term to the dying stage of most other fevers—so also may they abuse any substituted word. Nor is the term which

Dr. B. has brought forward entirely free from the very objections which he alleges against typhus. Adynamic is by no means new, but on the contrary, has been applied extensively, and to fevers, too, which are not typhous. We are not among those who fancy that names are of no importance—nay, we should be rejoiced to see the old ones remain undisturbed till some can be invented that are indisputably better, and at least free from all the objections that lie against the first. *Typhus*, I smoke or smoulder, is highly characteristic of this fever, and seems to distinguish it at once from the open blaze of synocha; but *adynamia* merely expresses a want of power which is too common to it and many other diseases. If, therefore, we look to the etymology of the words, we should decidedly prefer the first.

The author's title, adynamic fever, "is intended to include the putrid malignant fevers of Sydenham, the slow nervous fever of Huxham, (certainly his putrid malignant fever also,) the nervous fever of common language, the synochus, the typhus minor and gravior of Cullen, the jail and hospital fever, the *fièvres essentielles* of the French, the epidemic of the Irish writers, the contagious of Bateman, the typhus of Dr. Armstrong, and the proper, idiopathic, or essential fever of Dr. Clutterbuck." This is precisely as it should be—he confines the term within its proper bounds. In brief, he means to designate the typhus petechialis of Cullen in its two varieties, *gravior* and *minor*. This subdivision, however, he abandons, and describes the disease under four degrees of violence in a very lucid and intelligible manner. Dr. Armstrong's famous division, which has made so much noise in the world, and has been so extensively applied to other diseases, he does not notice. To this indeed there are so many weighty objections, that we are glad to find this highly practical writer, and faithful delineator of nature, has abandoned them.

In his etiology the author brings forth nothing new. He supposes that the fever results from a certain debilitating inguination of the blood, which is derived from the breathing of an impure atmosphere.

In his pathology he is an advocate for the old doctrine of idiopathic fever, and firmly believes that the disease has no local seat or punctum saliens; and, as he has endeavoured to establish his opinions by post obit examinations, he of course has a fair claim upon our attention and credulity. He has, however, by no means exhausted the subject, or made as extensive an argument as could be desired. This is one of the most important points in modern pathology, and the reader will be disappointed in finding that an author, so liberally endowed with the necessary abilities, and favoured with so many opportunities, has not pressed the argument with greater vehemence.

In the treatment of the disease we are grieved to find there is nothing new, nothing specific. However judiciously he uses the old apparatus, he has added nothing to it; so that we are left to go on in the old way of bleeding, purging, puking, with a copious list of stimulants, a class of medicines that are dangerous in almost any hands. Dr. B. is not an advocate for those copious bleedings which have lately been tried in the British metropolis, and yet he would appear to use the lancet with far more freedom than most other writers. He probably goes in the *middle way*, the safest path no doubt; for, if we are not greatly mistaken, the patient's life in this momentous disease will very often depend on the proper or improper loss of even five or six ounces, and also on the mere

point of taking this by venesection, cupping, or arteriotomy. It is really the Scylla and Charybdis of medicine where many intelligent pilots are wrecked. It is a subject which requires the most sedulous study of every man who is about to encounter this dangerous voyage.

On contemplating the *tout ensemble* of the author's treatment, we are disposed to indulge the most melancholy reflections on the progress of medicine as it relates to typhous fever. After all the immense experience which the last fifteen years has afforded in England and Ireland, the methods of cure of the most eminent physicians are very contradictory, and some of them irreconcileable. It was but a few years ago that an illustrious author brought forward cold batheing as an almost sovereign specific for typhous excitement; indeed so successful was Dr. Currie that hardly any thing else was needed—nothing, unless some eccoprotics, wine, and gruel. Here was no gastro-meningitis, for who ever heard of this disease, or any thing similar, being cured by a few buckets of water and a gallon of wine? But Dr. Currie was not mistaken in this matter, he was too much employed in this disease to be so egregiously deceived. On the other hand the physiological physicians would persuade us that the whole disease is symptomatic of a gastro-meningitis; and that some leeches to the head or stomach will eradicate this, and leave the system to recover with very little further assistance; while Dr. Armstrong, an illustrious name in medicine, finds that the various utility of bleeding, calomel, and warm bathing, are absolutely necessary to enable him to cope with the most vehement cases. The practice of Dr. Burne is that of the true eclectic; he takes a little from every system, and therefore makes up almost as many routines of cure as there are cases to be treated. This we believe is the true method in the present state of science, though it must be confessed that it is infinitely difficult and often dangerous in the execution. There is nothing certain, nothing specific; the physician is under the necessity of watching the disease with incessant care, and of accommodating his prescriptions at all times to the ever various states of the system, a perilous labour, and one which will too often foil the best informed practitioner, till he become fairly instructed in the school of experience. In all other fevers, if lesions be prevented or remedied, the disease will run its course with safety in good constitutions; but in this there is something mortal, which has thus far eluded the collective perspicacity of the medical world.

In many parts of the work there are new and useful observations which are too numerous to come within the compass of the present notice, particularly on the pulse, the state of the blood, suppression of urine with consequent effusion in the brain, and much more, for which we must refer to the book itself.

While we give the author, as we believe, his just meed of praise, it is not presumed that he has no faults. For these, however, we have not sought, nor do they properly come within the tenor of this notice. We should have been glad to find some enlivening quotations from standard books, with all the community of mind which results from collision of opinions. To sit down with an author who brings no one into notice but himself, is like spending an evening with a solitary stranger, instead of enjoying the sparkling collision of a full fireside of old acquaintances and friends.

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